



NEWS

JB Pritzker, Governor

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Illinois Department of Labor Shares Safety Measures for 2020 Planting Season

Illinois Department of Labor Urges Drivers and Farmers to Practice Safety

SPRINGFIELD – COVID-19 has hit the pause button for millions of people in Illinois – but that does not include the state’s farmers.

The warming spring weather means an onslaught of activity in farm fields across Illinois. This means a lot more farm vehicular traffic on Illinois’ roadways over the next few weeks. While the state’s stay-at-home mandate has reduced vehicular traffic overall, it doesn’t change the fact that spring planting season is one of the most dangerous times for farmers – both on the roads and in the fields.

“Farmers are the backbone of our state’s economy, and I know how hard they work this time of the year. But in the rush to get the 2020 crop in, we urge them to use caution while sharing the road,” said Michael Kleinik, director of the Illinois Department of Labor. “We all want farmers to head home to their families safe and sound at the end of each day.”

Vehicle safety is an especially important focus this time of year. Tractor overturns are the leading cause of fatalities in the agriculture industry, according to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration. These accidents result in about 130 deaths each year nationwide.

While tractor roll-over accidents most often occur on the farm, roadways also pose a major safety hazard. Too often a vehicle attempting to pass causes a collision before the tractor or farm implement can finish a left-hand turn. Such collisions occur simply because the driver fails to reduce speed for the slower moving farm implement.

Impatience and speed are a deadly combination on rural roads this time of year. Visibility is also a key to road safety. All agricultural vehicles using the public roadways must display the fluorescent orange Slow Moving Vehicle triangle. Additionally, tractors and other self-powered farm vehicles must have proper lighting. According to Illinois law:

- Lighting is required from 30 minutes before sunset to 30 minutes after sunrise.

- There should be two white lamps on the front of the vehicle, visible from at least 1000 feet to the front of the vehicle.
- There should be two red lamps on the rear of the vehicle, visible from at least 1000 feet to the rear of the vehicle.
- There should be at least one flashing amber signal lamp on the rear of the vehicle, mounted as high as possible and visible from at least 500 feet, which can be used during daylight as well.

Drivers should remember that farm vehicle operators have limited visibility to the rear. Anyone passing such a vehicle needs to use extreme caution.

Modern farm equipment provides effective safety devices if they are used properly. Death and serious injury from tractor roll overs can be prevented by roll-over protective structures – a roll bar or cage designed to provide a safe space around the driver.

Too often workers fail to use a vital part of this safety device – a safety belt. Always buckle up.

Modern farm equipment can also invite farmers to push their limits. No one is as safe as they should be when they are tired, hungry or thirsty. Rest. Nutrition. Hydration. Tractors aren't the only things that need maintenance and fuel to function properly.